

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 10, line 3, with the following rewritten paragraph:

A1
--Although in the illustrated embodiment each DGRE 310 is connected to a single SS7 signaling point, the present invention is not limited to such an embodiment. For example, in an alternative embodiment of the present invention, each DGRE 310 may be associated with more than one SS7 network element. In addition, DGREs 310 may be connected to network elements other than those illustrated in Figure 3, such as softswitches soft switches and media gateway controllers.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 18, with the following rewritten paragraph:

A2
--Figures 4(A) and 4(B) respectively illustrate examples of an IPv6 header and a flow label field of the IPv6 header. In Figure 4(A), IPv6 header 400 includes version field 402 indicates the IP version. Flow label field 404 contains parameters used by routers to provide quality of service. Payload length field 406 specifies the length of the IPv6 payload. Next header field 408 specifies the type of any extension headers that follow the base header. Extension headers are optional in IPv6 and are not of importance to explaining the present invention. Hop limit field 410 provides a strict bound on the maximum number of hops a datagram can make before being discarded. Source address field 412 and destination field 414 each contain 128-bit IP addresses, thus greatly increasing the IP address space over conventional IPv4.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 21, with the following rewritten paragraph:

--Figure 6(A) illustrates an example of an IP packet including an MPLS header.

a³ In the illustrated example, IP packet **600** includes an IP header **602**, an MPLS header **604**, a TCP header **606**, and a payload **608**. For an SS7 call signaling message routed between distributed gateway routing elements, IP header **602** may contain the IP address of one of the distributed gateway routing elements. MPLS header **604** may contain a service class identifier that identifies a class of service to be given to IP packet **600**. For SS7 call signaling messages, the class of service is preferably a high class of service that has low delay and high reliability. TCP header **606** contains transport layer information such as sequence numbers for a TCP ~~string~~ stream that may be established between distributed gateway routing elements. Finally, payload field **608** contains some or all of the SS7 call signaling packet. Thus, a variety of methods may be used to guarantee quality of service for call signaling packets routed between distributed gateway routing elements.--